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Testimony in favor of LD 1006 – expanding access to well water testing
Sydney R. Sewall MD MPH – Hallowell

Sen. Baldacci, Rep. Meyer, and members of the HHS committee:


I am writing as a representative of the **Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics**, an organization of over 300 health care practitioners distributed throughout the state who focus on the care of infants, children, teens and young adults. We are concerned about the theoretical link between intrauterine and early life exposure to PFAS compounds and increased disease risk for developmental delays in childhood. In addition, their physiologic effects are associated with later-onset hormone imbalance, chronic kidney disease, obesity, and some cancers. (Toxicology. 2020 Oct; 443: 152565). Adding to our concern is the fact that, by weight, bottle fed infants using PFAS-contaminated water have the highest exposures levels.

High occupational exposures were noted by DuPont many decades ago to have likely caused birth defects in the offspring of workers. These concerns led to further research that promoted a switch away from PFOS and PFOA to shorter chain and more complex replacements, though safety data was limited. (Sci Am May 2020). The thought at the time was that these compounds would have shorter half lives in humans and have less potential for harm, but unfortunately they and their metabolites can become incorporated into organs and persist.

Dr. Grandjean from Harvard was contracted by the EU to investigate PFAS effects on children in the Faroe Isles decades ago. He was surprised to find that the kids' responses to vaccines were dampened. Other European studies demonstrated an increased risk of miscarriage, along with adverse effects on pubertal development and on thyroid functions. (Grandjean letter to Michigan legislators, 2018)

It is unfortunate that these very useful compounds have had unintended consequences due to their chemical properties. While we search for alternatives and discontinue their non-essential use, it seem prudent to minimize the exposure of Maine citizens. Public water supplies are monitored. It would seem only fair to offer financial support to low income residents to monitor their wells. If PFAS levels are high, the family can prevent harm by using an alternative water source for drinking – and especially for mixing formula.

Sincerely,


Sydney R. Sewall, MD MPH
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